

## SR 270, Pullman to the Idaho State Line

The goal is to finalize designs so that right-of-way acquisition and construction can begin as soon as funds are allocated, to improve safety and capacity by making this stretch of SR 270 a four-lane, divided highway.

### Why is WSDOT improving SR 270?

The department plans to improve capacity and safety by widening SR 270 from a two-lane to a four-lane facility and by constructing a divided highway with a 60-foot wide median configuration. SR 270 is an important commute route between two university communities, Pullman (Washington State University), and Moscow (University of Idaho). Along with passenger vehicles, this route also carries a large number of heavy trucks.

### The end result

This project will add a general-purpose lane in each direction and will provide a 60-foot wide median to separate opposing traffic. Access control will be established along SR 270. The highway will be realigned to the north near the Avista Utilities property and at the Airport Road East vicinity. This will allow the existing SR 270 alignment at these locations to be used as a frontage road system for local businesses, farms, and residents. The frontage road system, in combination with access control will reduce the number of approaches to SR 270, which in turn will improve traffic flow and safety.

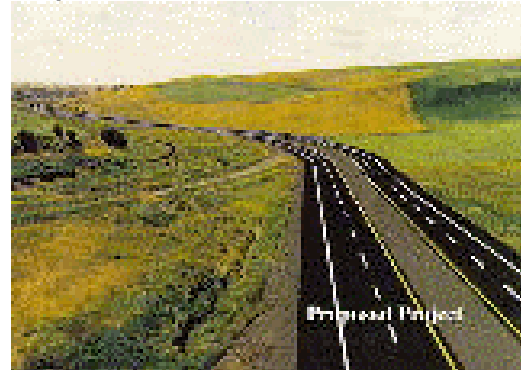
### What are the project timelines?

- June 1998, preliminary engineering began; but was suspended in January 2000, due to a reduction in funding. February 2001, preliminary engineering was started again, with the intent of completing the Access Report. This document is necessary to establish Access Control and purchase right-of-way. Upon approval of the Access Report an Access Hearing will be held. We anticipate this to occur in January 2002.
- If funding becomes available right-of way acquisitions can begin as early as March 2002.

Existing



Proposed



### Construction Update:

Construction funding has not yet been appropriated.

### Project Facts

- Frontage Roads on the south side of the existing trail consolidate crossing points and conflicts; improving safety.
- Frontage Roads allows both economic development and consistency with Whitman County plans.
- Additional wetlands will be established and Paradise Creek will be improved in an effort to enhance the corridor.

## **How can I get involved?**

Several meetings regarding this project have been held over the past few years. The meetings with the public will continue on a regular basis. An informal open house will be scheduled prior to the Access Hearing. Interested citizens should contact the project engineer's office listed below or WSDOT Eastern Region Public Affairs at (509) 324-6015.

## **What is being done to protect the environment?**

The proposed SR 270 widening project shifts the existing SR 270 alignment to the north, with the specific purpose of minimizing impact to: wetlands, Paradise Creek and the Bill Chipman Palouse Trail. However, about 5 acres of wetlands could not be avoided. Consequently, WSDOT met with Washington State Department of Ecology, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, to evaluate the wetland area impacted and to develop a mitigation plan that would replace these 5 acres of wetlands. The proposed mitigation plan calls for a new, bigger wetland site near the Sunshine Road intersection to be created. The mitigation plan also provides enhancements to Paradise Creek by purchasing additional land currently being used for grazing cattle. This land with access to the creek would then be fenced and the cattle removed permanently. Rock check dams, creating a cascade effect, would be strategically placed in the creek to aerate the water. Another important proposal of the mitigation plan is to plant native trees and shrubs along the creek to shade and cool the water.

WSDOT and Whitman County Parks Department worked together to develop a design for the Bill Chipman Palouse Trail that now parallels SR 270 on the south. The proposed plan will enhance the trail by limiting access and developing a new frontage road system that will consolidate existing approaches that currently cross the trail at grade. Doing this will reduce conflict points between vehicles that now must cross the trail to access the highway and trail users that sometimes forget to yield to vehicles crossing the Bill Chipman Palouse Trail. As designs are refined, new environmental issues may be identified that will require additional

mitigation strategies.

## **Increasing safety is one of our priorities**

This section of SR 270 has a history of collision problems due to the high traffic volumes (on some sections volumes reach 14,000 vehicles per day). Head-on collisions spurred in part by improper passing, driver fatigue or driver impairment have resulted in many serious accidents. This project would substantially improve safety by creating a divided highway, with a 60-foot wide median and an additional lane in each direction. Utilization of the frontage road will help limit access and crossing points and contribute to additional safety and operational benefits from the project. The Bill Chapman Palouse Trail that parallels the existing highway on the south side provides a convenient route for bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

## **Government-to-government tribal consultation process**

The WSDOT Eastern Region Environmental Office has contacted the Spokane Tribe, Colville Confederated Tribes, the Kalispel Tribe, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and the Nez Perce Tribe, to introduce these tribes to our proposed plan of widening SR 270 and to ask for their help in identifying any culturally sensitive areas within the corridor. WSDOT has contracted Eastern Washington University to perform an Archeological and Historical Survey.

## **Financial Information**

This project is in the preliminary design stage. Its current estimated total cost is \$23.1 million. The legislature has allocated \$344,000 to continue design work for the 01-03 biennium and \$350,000 for the 03-05 biennium budgets. At this time, additional funding amounting to \$20.9 million is necessary to support the current WSDOT schedule of completion. If funding does not become available an adjustment and slowdown of the design, right-of-way and construction schedules will be required.

## Expenditure Plan

	Prior Expenditures	Remaining Costs	Total
State and Federal Funds	\$1,447,000	\$694,000	\$2,141,000
Funded subtotal	\$1,447,000	\$694,000	\$2,141,000
Unfunded amount		\$20,936,000	\$20,936,000
Total Cost	\$1,447,000	\$21,630,000	\$23,077,000

Financial data is current as of 9/1/01.

## How can I get more information?

For detailed information about this project contact:

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